Dorset County Association of Church Bell Ringers

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Dorset County Association of Church Bell Ringers
Bell Restoration Fund is a registered charity. Charity number 294239

General Meetings and Member Voting Policy

Version History

Version	Approved by	Date Approved	Minute Ref	Latest Review By	Review Date	Minute Ref
1.0	DCA Committee	26//07/26	Item 8	DCA Committee	26/07/26	Item 8

Next Review Due by July 2028.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the principles by which the Association conducts General Meetings and makes decisions of the membership. It aims to ensure that General Meetings are conducted fairly, transparently, consistently and inclusively, while enabling all eligible members to participate fully in the Association's democratic processes, irrespective of the format in which a meeting is held.

This Policy establishes the governance principles for the conduct of General Meetings and the associated voting process. The detailed procedures, timescales and administrative arrangements necessary to implement this Policy shall be set out in the Standing Orders.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all General Meetings of the Association, including:

- Annual General Meetings (AGMs); and
- Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs).

Unless otherwise required by the Association's Rules or by law, both types of meeting shall operate in accordance with the same principles.

3. Meeting Format

General Meetings may be held:

- in person;
- virtually using an approved online meeting platform; or
- in a hybrid format combining both.

The format of each General Meeting shall be determined jointly by the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted, accessibility for members, practical considerations, the efficient conduct of the Association's business and, where relevant, any advice provided by the Safeguarding Officer concerning the safety and wellbeing of members.

4. Business of Meetings

All formal business shall be submitted before the meeting.

This includes, where appropriate:

- motions;
- nominations;
- reports;
- supporting statements; and
- any other documents intended for consideration by the membership.

The submission procedures and associated timescales shall be defined in the Standing Orders.

5. Meeting Papers

Meeting papers shall be circulated sufficiently in advance of the meeting to enable members to consider the business properly. The Standing Orders shall specify the minimum notice periods, submission deadlines and publication arrangements.

6. Apologies and Written Contributions

Members who are unable to attend a General Meeting may submit apologies by email to the Secretary. Apologies must be submitted in accordance with the timescales specified in the Standing Orders. Members submitting apologies may also submit written statements by email for circulation or presentation to the meeting, subject to the Association's policies and procedural requirements. The procedures for submitting apologies and supporting papers shall be defined within the Standing Orders.

7. Standards of Conduct

All submissions, statements and contributions must comply with the Association's Code of Conduct and any other relevant policies. The Association may decline to circulate or present material that does not comply with those policies, provided such decisions are made fairly, consistently and in accordance with published procedures.

8. Purpose of General Meetings

General Meetings exist to enable members to:

- receive reports;
- ask questions;
- debate proposals;
- exchange views; and
- inform the subsequent decision-making process.

The meeting itself is the forum for discussion. Binding decisions shall normally be made through the Association's formal voting process following the meeting.

9. Formal Voting

Binding decisions of the membership shall be made using an approved independent third-party voting platform. The voting system shall:

- issue ballot invitations using a voter list prepared by the Secretary from those members who are both:
  - recorded as Participating Members in accordance with Section 6.3 of the Standing Orders; and
  - subscribed to the Association's electronic distribution list maintained in accordance with Section 6.2 of the Standing Orders.
- record votes securely;
- provide an auditable record of the outcome; and
- produce the official declaration of results.

Only votes cast through the approved voting system shall be regarded as valid and binding. The detailed administration of the voting process shall be specified within the Standing Orders.

10. Advisory Votes

The Chair may permit advisory or indicative votes during a General Meeting to assist discussion. Such votes shall have no constitutional or binding effect.

11. Voting Eligibility

Only Participating Members shall be eligible to vote in formal ballots. The criteria for Participating Member status and the administrative arrangements for maintaining that status shall be defined in the Standing Orders. All Participating Members shall have an equal opportunity to participate in the formal voting process regardless of whether they attended the meeting.

12. Quorum

The quorum requirements for General Meetings shall be those defined by the Association's Rules. Where attendance at the meeting is below the quorum requirement, but the number of Participating Members casting valid votes in the subsequent formal ballot meets or exceeds the quorum requirement, the meeting and all resulting decisions shall be deemed quorate, valid and binding.

13. Elections

Only Participating Members shall be eligible to stand for election to the Association's Committee. The nomination procedures and election timetable shall be defined within the Standing Orders.

14. Voting Outcomes

Each Participating Member shall be entitled to one vote. Only votes cast for or against a proposal shall determine the outcome. Abstentions shall not count towards either side of the vote. In the event of an equality of votes, the proposal shall be deemed not to have passed. The Chair shall not have a casting vote.

15. Attendance and Orderly Conduct

General Meetings shall be conducted in a manner that promotes respectful participation and protects members from intimidation or unreasonable disruption. Attendance rights shall be determined by the Association's Rules and Standing Orders.

Life Members who are not Participating Members may attend General Meetings unless otherwise restricted under the Association's disciplinary procedures or Standing Orders but shall not be entitled to vote unless they also qualify as Participating Members.

The Chair shall have authority to maintain the orderly conduct of meetings. Where disciplinary sanctions or other authorised restrictions apply to a member, those restrictions may include attendance or participation at General Meetings where appropriate.

16. Standing Orders

The Standing Orders shall provide the detailed procedures necessary to implement this Policy, including, but not limited to:

- the definition and administration of Participating Member status;
- meeting notice periods and submission deadlines;
- voting periods and ballot administration;
- nomination procedures;
- procedures for submitting apologies;
- appointment and responsibilities of Returning Officers;
- arrangements for chairing meetings in the absence of the designated officers; and
- publication of voting results.

17. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed by the Committee at least once every two years and may be reviewed at any time if necessary. An earlier review shall be undertaken where required to reflect changes to the Association's Rules, Standing Orders, governance arrangements, legal or regulatory requirements, or where experience from the operation of this Policy indicates that amendments are necessary.